CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Certain points of a broad nature and general importance, which have emerged from the discussion in the preceeding chapters, may be briefly re-stated here by way of summing up. The first point to be mentioned is the awareness, on the part of the grammarians, of the exact relationship between the language and the science of grammar. The language was the more important thing. It was an end towards which the grammar was a means; the language was the 'lakṣya', the grammar the 'lakṣaṇa' and naturally it had to be based on the former ('lakṣyamūlaṁ hi lakṣaṇam'). The facts of the language were not to be questioned, for they were self-valid ('siddha'). Why a particular root should have only a limited number of forms ('niyata-viṣaya'), or why a particular root should mean this thing only and not that, or have only a particular shade of a meaning and not the other - there was no explanation for it, except that it was just the nature of that root ('svabhāva' or 'svābhāvya'). The grammar had to take the language as it was and had to analyse (vyā √kṛ) it.

Since a language is always changing, in however small a measure, the grammarians had to see to it that their technical system did not become rigid, but was elastic enough to accommodate innovations. Whereas it was not difficult for the younger schools to absorb new material, the Pāṇinians and the followers of other older schools could do it by looking

upon the listing (of both roots and meanings) as only illustrative ('nidarśana' or 'upalakṣaṇa') and not exhaustive, or by treating certain classes as open lists ('ākṛtigaṇas'), or by appealing to the authority of Patañjali ('Bhāṣyakāra-vacanāt') or some other master; and even where all such technical devices failed, the actual usage, the śiṣṭa-prayoga, was always an authority in itself. That was the final authority which one had always to consult without pinning oneself down to the grammatical text alone ('lokāt sūribhir atyūhyam' and 'na punaḥ pāṭha eva śaraṇam'). And the adage 'prayoga-śaraṇā vaiyākaraṇāḥ' is well known enough.

Coming to some of the individual results, we saw that the roots were not looked upon as something having a real existence; they were only theoretical abstractions ('prakṛti-pratyaya-vibhāgasya kālpanikatvā'). Nor does it seem that all of them were regarded as absolutely ultimate or irreducible. Whatever phonetic unit, characterised by a certain meaning, served as a basis for the inflectional and derivative suffixes and thus formed a nexus of a family of words was a dhātu ('dhātutvāl laḍādayaḥ'). And apart from the avowedly secondary roots (sanādyantā dhātavaḥ), even some of the so-called primary roots (bhūvādayo dhātavaḥ) like mokṣ, jāgṛ etc. were also known to be of a derivative nature. It was noted that not all the roots were equally productive and that certain roots were in some way deficient; either they required substitutes in certain systems, or had only nominal derivatives and no finite forms ('na tiṅviṣayāḥ'), or had only a limited number of such forms ('na sārvatrikaḥ'), like ghas, vac, etc. Also the fact that

some roots occurring in the Veda ('chandasi') had later become obsolete and that, on the other hand, some new roots had appeared in the spoken language (laukika) had been observed. Lastly, the grammarians had also noted that in the case of certain roots verbal forms alone were in use in certain parts of the country and derivatives alone in others; or that a root could be current in one meaning in some locality, and in a different one in another (cf. 'tat-taddeśādiprasiddhārth-ānāṁ pṛthaṅnirdeśaḥ' Kṣ under P.Dh. I, 637-638). It shows that the consideration of the time-space context, however hazy, was not quite unknown.

That Pāṇini should have instinctively sensed the presence of a sibilant in the roots majj and bhrajj had already been a matter of admiration; and the statement of roots in diphthongs like gai styai etc. though rejected by scholars like BR and Wh., has now generally been restored as more faithfully representing the original ablaut scheme. I think that the statement of roots in -urv (turv, jurv, etc.) should similarly prove to be historically more truthful than that with a long ū (tūrv, jūrv, etc.). Lastly it is worth considering further the grammarians' view that the penultimate nasal of a root, though actually appearing in various forms, was at bottom a dental one.

As regards the meanings of the roots, the definitions were not meant to be logical or scientific. In order to justify the inclusion of a particular vocable in the dhātupāṭha, 'some' action connected with it had to be shown (kriyāvācitvam ākhyātum) - that is all. It is not, therefore, the fact that a

large majority of the definitions are not scientific, but rather that some portion of them should be scientific or real - it is that which should be surprising. The doctrine of the 'dhātūnām anekārthatva' must have been originally meant only to bring out the illustrative character of the arthapāṭha and as a warning against being exclusively guided by the definitions of the dhātupāṭhas. But later on some people seem to have understood it as denoting that any root could have almost any meaning and they misused it (along with the 'bāhulaka') and indulged in fanciful etymologies (where, as the jibe goes, consonants counted for little, and vowels for nothing). Thus the necessity of always having an eye on the actual usage of the language, which was implied in the upalakṣaṇa character of the arthapāṭha, was in such cases almost lost sight of. That, however, is a different thing.

It is impossible to do full justice to that most intricate and subtle technical apparatus consisting of the Anubandhas, ingenious groupings and other devices invented by the ancient Hindu grammarians. Though more a museum piece to-day, the tremendous amount of practical utility which it yielded in those days by securing utmost brevity - which was the paramount consideration - is probably unparalleled anywhere. Armed with the various code-letters and accents, and positioned in a particular setting of groups and sub-groups, a root not seldom presents almost its entire peculiar verbal system in miniature. Though a beginner will find this apparatus a hopelessly insuperable barrier at first, once he is initiated into and becomes at home with its workings he cannot fail to be

impressed by the imagination displayed in its conception and the superb skill with which it was executed.

While in estimating the value of the grammatical texts like the dhātupāṭhas the need to be generally guided by the existing independent literature is quite evident, an over-emphasis on it should be avoided. We must think twice before calling any of the grammarians' teachings as 'ficticious' because we will be basing our judgments on the sole evidence of a chance survival of only a small fraction of the literature known to the grammarians 2500 years ago, and of a language which the grammarians used in daily speech and writing. This is all the more so since after BR and Wh wrote their works, new material which was either unknown or not available to them has been steadily growing. Whitney's 'Roots', therefore, has to be brought up-to-date, and it would be a good idea if somebody undertook it.

We saw that the Dhātupāṭha did not remain in a stagnant condition. With each new system it has undergone some revision. Besides arranging it in a more orderly and more systematic way, each new system has something to add and something to drop, - the tendency on the whole being to preserve what had been handed down and to make fresh contributions in the light of new researches. The fact that even purely Vedic roots have been discovered and given their due place in the dhātup. by the later schools shows, as Katre has rightly indicated, that the grammarians were not 'merely armchair philosophers weaving out of their imagination phantastic

forms' but were engaged in continuous researches.

This is not to suggest that the dhātupāṭhas are absolutely free from defects. No human work is. But no useful purpose will be served by emphasizing these. And secondly, if even Whitney, working at the close of the 19th century with all the modern tools and appliances at his command, felt himself justified in expecting that his errors 'will be viewed with a reasonable degree of indulgence, considering the novelty and the extreme laboriousness of the undertaking', how much more this indulgence is due to the ancient Hindu grammarians who, working centuries before the Christian era without any such paraphernalia at their disposal, were not only the pioneers but proved to be the world's earliest masters in the science of descriptive grammar ?